

THE MIND'S EYE:

Reviews and Comment

NORTH ADAMS STATE COLLEGE

May 1977

Volume 1, Number 2

Editorial

THIS MAGAZINE

This magazine is for thoughts--your own or your reflection of, and on, someone else's thoughts--it does not matter. This is why we see the national periodical press as The Mind's Eye's bread and butter. Original thought is hard to come by and does not occur in a vacuum. We look around constantly for the ideas of our contemporaries. An aware community needs to acknowledge those ideas, to disseminate and criticize them.

There are, at the same time, original things happening on campus. People are doing research, writing papers, and giving speeches. The Mind's Eye would like to publish these in shortened versions. This will give their authors notice, their ideas circulation, and us, their colleagues, greater knowledge.

Next issue's deadline: September 2.

This is a magazine? With your help it will be.

A GARDEN OF STRIPS AND CIRCLES

For years home gardens have been arranged with all vegetables planted in neat, orderly rows with a space between each row. You could be wasting up to half your garden area if you follow this procedure. The space between rows provides your garden with nothing except a place for weeds to grow.

Is there a better way? Perhaps. Some people who have ventured into the area of organic gardening believe there is (see "Reshaping the Garden," by Margaret Boyles in the May Country Journal). Instead of rows, try planting in circles and strips. Corn, beans, and squash lend themselves to circle

planting. Start with an initial circle 3 to 4 feet in diameter with corn planted on the circumference. Pollination of the corn is no problem in a circle, as it often is with the end plants of a row. Next, plant a circle of pole beans outside the corn circle. The beans will use the corn plants to grow on. In addition, the beans, since they are legumes, will increase the nitrogen content of your soil and thus aid the corn and squash plants. Finally, in the outermost circle plant squash or cucumbers. The broad, prickly leaves of these plants will shade the soil, thereby increasing its water retention, and will provide an excellent barrier against skunks and raccoons.

The corn-bean-squash circle is but one example of circle planting. The basic idea is to plant together those plants that complement each other in their growing requirements and nutritional needs. Moreover, the above example does not require additional fertilizer, since the legumes are nature's way of recharging the soil.

Strip planting involves planting in blocks or beds. Take a strip of your garden that can be reached on all sides (about 3 feet wide) and scatter your seeds (carrots). The intent here is to saturate an area with your vegetables and thereby inhibit weed growth. In addition, with the elimination of rows, you can get more vegetables in a smaller area.

Finally, any place where you have unplanted soil (between your strips and circles), plant a cover crop. The type of cover crop will vary with the season. The cover crop, while growing, will aid moisture retention in your soil and discourage weed growth; when tilled under, it will improve your soil.

There you have it. A garden of strips and circles without any unplanted soil. A garden where plants are working together, weeds are discouraged, moisture retained, soil improved, and fertilizer application reduced. Now enjoy.

--Paul Humora--

THE POET AND THE PUGILIST

Can you imagine a meeting and a joint effort between dancers Margot Fonteyn and Ben Vereen? How about singers Leontyne Price and Ringo Starr? Or violinists Isaac Stern and Henny Youngman? Would you believe a luncheon with poets Marianne Moore and Muhammad Ali? Well, this latter confrontation is exactly what happened, thanks to the agency of the irrepressible George Plimpton ("These Sporting Poets," Harper's, May).

Plimpton, who has quarterbacked an NFL team, gone toe-to-toe with a pro boxer, and golfed with a PGA player, took on perhaps his most formidable task when he set up a meeting at Toots Shor's between the delicate octogenarian poetess and the self-proclaimed "greatest" prizefighter in the world.

Plimpton had accompanied Miss Moore to sporting events before the momentous encounter at Shor's, and he writes of her somewhat unusual responses to these events. For instance, Miss Moore seemed more interested in baseball players' names than in their averages or RBI's. She was intrigued by Minnie Minoso and Vinegar Bend Mizell. She was especially engaged by Yankee pitcher Bill Monbouquette--not only by his name but by his unconscious but persistent rearrangement of his jock strap after each pitch. Commented Miss Moore: "There is an insouciance in that gesture which is appealing. He should not be told. We should keep mum." She wrote his name down in her ever present notebook. "Monbouquette," she noted. "'My little bouquet.' Absolutely correct."

Plimpton took Miss Moore to the Patterson-Chuvalo fight. She was a Patterson partisan because she was attracted by his courtesy and the saga of his childhood, but she didn't like prizefighting: "Marred physiognomy and an occasional death don't seem an ideal life objective. I do not like demolishing anything--even a paper bag. Salvaging and saving all but dominate my life."

At the fight, she first saw Ali. When Plimpton asked her if she would like to meet Ali, she replied, "I do not see any reason why I should not meet someone who assures everyone 'I am the greatest' and who is a poet nonetheless." Hence, the luncheon at Shor's.

Ali suggested that, if Miss Moore were the greatest poetess in the country, the two of them should collaborate on a poem. They tried alternating lines on a sonnet about the upcoming Terrell fight. Miss Moore, as Plimpton notes, was apparently a little intimidated by Ali's presence and a bit slow in holding up her end; and to Ali, according to Plimpton, "speed of delivery was very much a qualification of a professional poet." When she seemed really hung up, Ali finished the poem--as Plimpton says, "not . . . in a patronizing way at all, but more out of consideration, presumably that every poet, however distinguished, is bound to have a bad day and should be helped through it."

The poem is no literary masterpiece, but what was Miss Moore's opinion of Ali the poet? "Well," she wrote, "we were slightly under constraint. And the rhyme for Terrell (hell) being of one syllable is hardly novel. . . . Cassius has an ear, and a liking for balance . . . comic, poetic drama, it is poetry . . . saved by a hair from being the flattest,

peanuttiest, unwariest of boastings.

And of Ali himself? "The Greatest, though a mere youth," she wrote, "has snuffed out more dragons than Smokey the Bear hath. . . . he is sagacious. . . . He is literary. . . . Admittedly the classiest and the brassiest. . . . He is neat. . . . He fights and he writes. Is there something I have missed? He is a smiling pugilist."

Not a Yalta Conference or a SALT Talk. Perhaps not even a terribly "historical" meeting. But it surely was a memorable meeting.

--Michael Haines--

SMOG AND THE ACROPOLIS

The Greek government has long recognized the importance of preserving the treasures of Greek antiquity, and, in the case of art objects and artifacts displayed in the National and other museums, it has done so with distinction. But the Parthenon and the other ancient buildings that even today dominate the city of Athens are slowly crumbling amidst the smog and pollution of modern Athens. In antiquity, on a clear day, you could see forever from the Acropolis. Today, even the view of nearby landmarks is blurred by the smoke from the factories, shipyards, and refineries that ring Athens, and tourists are no longer allowed in or near the ancient buildings because of the danger of falling pieces from the ancient stonework, now weakened from years of exposure to the filthy air of Athens.

The Greek government is acting now to save its architectural treasures. It has established a Committee to Preserve the Acropolis and it has supported UNESCO's international appeal for \$15 million to save the Acropolis with a pledge of \$5 million. These events are described by Emily Vermeule in the May Atlantic ("The Parthenon is Shrinking"). Ms. Vermeule is a professor of classics at Harvard and one of the distinguished group of international scholars working with UNESCO and the Greek government. She observes that one cannot expect the Greeks to move their industry or close it down; and, in that mountainous country, modern development is bound to root up some antiquities, for the good classical sites are also the good modern ones.

In this conflict between the achievements of humanity in the past and the need for alleviating poverty in the present, the

Parthenon has immense authority. The Greek government has already demonstrated its commitment to protecting the cultural environment of Greece. The preservation of the Parthenon, one of the most impressive buildings in the world, may show the way to save other masterpieces in Greece and in other countries.

--Mary Fuqua--

IMPRESSIONS OF JIMMY CARTER

President Jimmy Carter--it still sounds strange to say it--has now been chief executive for his first hundred days and has given indications of what he is and what we may expect. Hedrick Smith, writing in the Sunday New York Times of April 24, mentions Carter's "deliberate 'depomping' of the Presidency" and sees Carter as trying to make "the American system work better rather than radically alter it." Smith characterizes Carter as demonstrating a "moralistic spirit of reformism, with its emphasis on good government, traditional values, sacrifice, and patriotism" reminiscent of an earlier, innocent idealism.

Surely Carter's ways are different from both the ambitious growth and power concepts which characterized the Democratic Sixties and the glorification of complacency which typified subsequent Republican executives. The quick change to Carter's honesty, decency, and integrity show him initially to be self-effacing, even "corny." Yet, these characteristics of his "style" are components of his moralism and idealism. Carter seems to be a moralist who bases his moralism, not on a righteous and aggressive crusade for particular groups or causes, such as civil rights or world peace, but on a more general and substantial idea of goodness characterized by frugality, mutual respect, and belief in the ability of men to reason together.

He has already addressed himself to the broad issues of energy, environment, human rights, and governmental responsibility in a way which demonstrates this philosophy. But his moralistic generalism is sure to pose serious political problems in the future, for in discussing the ways and means of achieving the common good, Carter has neglected addressing himself to the specific goals of entrenched power blocs--labor, the oil lobby, business groups, and even Congress itself, that labyrinth of pork barreling, patronage, and vested interests. Thus, while the newcomer Carter brings a laudable fresh wind of change to a stagnant political system, he may eventually raise a storm of opposition by confronting powerful political forces which resist fresh air and sunlight.

--Randy Hansis--

CLEP DEBATE CONTINUES

In the March issue of Change Professor Carl Stecher of Salem State College criticized the College-Level Examination Program's (CLEP) General Examinations (see The Mind's Eye, April). Jack N. Arbolino, of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), presents a vigorous rebuttal in the April Change ("The College-Level Examination Program: Another View"). Mr. Arbolino makes no apology for the CLEP tests. Indeed, the concept of credit-by-examination (the broader issue in the debate) has many supporters. In its ten-year existence CLEP has received the full endorsement of the Commission on Educational Credit of the American Council on Education, has been funded by both the Carnegie Corporation of New York and CEEB (over \$6 million), and is recognized by over 1,800 colleges throughout the United States.

In his response to Professor Stecher, Mr. Arbolino presents an able case for the defense. Stecher's questioning of CLEP's national norming standards and of the content of the General Examinations is carefully examined and refuted. He acknowledges CEEB's sensitivity to criticism, and he cites its responsiveness. During the past two years the General Examinations have been reviewed

and improved by extending the testing time for each exam from 60 to 90 minutes and by adding a centrally graded essay to English Composition.

Will these developments satisfy the opposition? Perhaps some will take a further look at the General Examinations. However, those philosophically opposed to credit-by-examination probably will not be mollified. Two points can be stated with certainty: research on CLEP will continue and new critics will surface.

--Jim Sulzman--

IN BRIEF

"The Limits of Ethnicity," by Howard F. Stein and Robert F. Hill. The American Scholar, Spring. How ethnicity can become too much of a good thing.

"The Life and Hard Times of the Sports Village at Bretton Woods," by Daniel Ford. Country Journal, May. A fable of the Seventies: the rise and fading away of the most ambitious resort development scheme in New England.

"The Dangers of a New Cold War," by Georgi Arbatov. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March. A look at the speck in our own eye, as seen by Russia's foremost American expert.

"Cancer and the Environment," by Samuel S. Epstein. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March. Cancer kills one in five Americans; most cancers are environmental in origin and are therefore preventable.

"A Conversation with John Gardner," by Don Edwards and Carol Polsgrove. Atlantic, May. The author of October Light talks about life, art, politics, music, and fiction. How did he come by his skillful use of language? "Well, it's really pretty simple. My father, a farmer, who does sermons, goes around to these little churches and preaches. He knows the Bible backwards and forwards, as well as Shakespeare and poetry. He reads that stuff and he loves language. Everybody in his family does . . . it's in the family. . . . And my mother is an English teacher." Simple? If you come from a family like the Gardners. Even then. . . .

The Mind's Eye will appear monthly when the college is in session. Members of the college community are invited to participate as editors and contributors. Suggestions as to coverage, format, and content are sought. Editorial board: Stephen A. Green, R. Michael Haines, Charles A. McIsaac, Thomas A. Mulkeen. Editor: Charles A. McIsaac.